

APRIL 1935

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP

OFFICIAL ORGAN HAPPY HOURS BROTHERHOOD.

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TIP TOP CLUB REPORT

We have no new members to report this month, probably due to the early arrival of Spring and warm weather which doubtless will slow up our work until cold weather arrives once more, yet your secretary is ready and willing to carry on as long as there is anything to do and report.

It was my desire to compile a new list of all member's lists of wants and duplicates but so few responded to my special notice in the February Roundup that this will be deferred to a later date, when more interest is shown.

There is one thing that I will fully appreciate and that is that I wish to hear from all our members with just a few words as to how they like the Tip Top Club and what benefits they have derived as well as suggestions for any betterment in the Club for the benefit of all members. I will be glad to embody any information sent me into an interesting news item for all to read.

Also send in your story of your first novel or the thrill you received when you filled the last gap in your favorite file. After this report you will find the very interesting story of Reckless Ralph Cummings. T.T.C. No. 3 and his first novel.

Please do not forget that your secretary is always willing and ready to be of assistance to all who will call upon him for aid. Fraternally, M.E. MARSH, Secretary.

MY FIRST NOVEL

By Ralph F. Cummings..

Away back in the latter part of 1913 or early 1914, I read my first novel. I feel sure it was an Old King Brady story in Frank Tousey's Secret Service. If I remember rightly, the picture showed Old King Brady in front of a large cell, from which a huge snake was crawling; and Old King Brady taking a shot at it. As I have not seen this picture for a long time, I am not sure of myself but no doubt it will give you an idea of an Old King Brady "Secret Service Weekly" of that period.

At that time I was serving milk for father as we had a large milk route and did not get to serving until noon-time, the washing of the cans and bottles became my afternoon task. We had a little boiler and I would get up steam to heat the water. Night and morning after the milking machine had done its work I'd jump in and help with the stripping. I had no other farm work to do as father had hired hands. They read dime novels and there were about six or eight of us who would get together on Saturday or Sunday and they'd bring along their novels. The ones on display were only the Tousey's "big six", namely, Pluck & Luck-Secret Service-Wild West-Fame & Fortune-Boys of '76-and Work & Win, these being the only ones we knew of at that time.

So in spare time we read or chatted over the various adventures of the heroes, such as Old King Brady, and Harry capturing crooks redhanded; or Young Wild West trailing the rustlers, Etc.. All of a sudden I pricked up my ears and became interested, and borrowed a novel from one of the boys-I believe it was a Secret Service. From then on I bought novels every week, such as Secret Service,

Liberty Boys of '76, Wild West and Pluck & Luck, as I did not care much for Fame & Fortune and Work and Win.

Father never said anything about me reading novels; in fact I don't think he knew they were novels. Only one time he caught me reading "The Dalton Gang of Far West Bandits" and is the only time he ever said anything against me reading them as long as I did my work. Many a night I would read all night through, finishing one and starting on another. One day we saw an ad of Ralph P. Smith of Lawrence, Mass that he sold all kind of mixed novels at 25 for \$1. This was along in 1917 or 1918. I remember my first dollar's worth-yum yum, and it wasn't long till another buck went to Ralph. We didn't care the shape it was in if the reading was good.

As my friends grew up, some quit reading, some getting married; and I was left alone to stick to dime novels-and I'm still sticking to them, for they are my favorites.

Many rubber stampings on novels those days were of dealers, such as Harold G. Lorang, from whom I bought every week--and Joseph Grim and Keel's Bookstore, both in Buffalo. The latter is still selling novels. On one I found the name and address of Bob Smeltzer, vice president of the Happy Hours Brotherhood. I sent him a card asking about boys 5¢ weeklies or story papers. He replied that he hadn't seen a dime novel for years and had concluded they were all gone, but asked if they could still be had. This was about 1921. I was not slow in getting into the buying, selling and trading game.

In 1924, I wrote Ralph Smith suggesting we form a club of dime novel collectors. He was very willing and so the Happy Hours Brotherhood was born.. In 1925 Ralph started the Happy Hours Magazine and ran it until July 1,

1930, when I took it over..On Jan. 1, 1931, I started the new organ of the "Dime Novel Roundup, which is still going. Ralph Smith started the Happy Hours Magazine again with the March issue of 1931 and is still running as strong as ever.

From July to Dec. 1930 I published the Happy Hours, but decided to have a new magazine beginning with the new year. Bob Smeltzer coined the title "Dime Novel Roundup". I have published numerous other papers in the past.

My first, "The Cummings & Clark Flyer" in Dec. 1922, printed by Bob Smeltzer in Phila., was $6\frac{1}{2} \times 7$, on one side only. Bob sent me a framed copy of the first issue which hangs on my wall... Then I published a 4-page 6x9 which appeared quarterly for three issues when I changed it to a monthly with Andrew Hanes, Jr. of Garfield, N.J. doing the printing.

He has remained my printer ever since. This gives you a little history of the papers I have had printed.

Some day I shall complete a more correct list of all the papers published; how many and all pertinent information, etc.

We've just received some very sad news, of the death of one of our English collectors over across the pond; that Edward Herdmann, aged 75, was murdered last New Year's Eve.

He was a collector of Tokens and Elooids for a long time. He was also the publisher of The Hobby World.

Also in the original issue was a poem by Col. Charles D. Randolph (Buckskin Bill), entitled "Dandy" and inscribed to "My Old Pard RECKLESS RALPH CUMMINGS". (Space in this mimeographed reprint does not permit our using same.)